Contra Costa County Historical Society

BULLETIN

POST OFFICE BOX 190 NOVEMBER 1, 1973 MARTINEZ, CALIFORNIA

East Bay Regional Parks–How They Grew and The Outlook for More Parks in Contra Costa

Picnickers in the early 1900s pause for the photographer in what 30 years later became Tilden Park's Lake Anza area. Tilden Regional Park is the oldest large-land facility in the EBRPD's chain of outdoor nature-and-fun spots.

A digging into the past of the East Bay Regional Park District will entertain and instruct Society members at the Fall Membership Meeting, to be held at the Concord Sheraton Inn, Thursday evening, November 15, 1973.

Mary Curran's farmhouse and plum trees stood near Tilden Park's Orchard Picnic Area.

Vice President Louis L. Stein announces that a presentation on "The History and Future Prospects of Regional Parks in Contra Costa County" will be given by Christian Nelson of the Park District. He is chief of the District's Interpretive Department.

His talk will be sparked by a showing of slides, both historical and modern, on the development and operation of Regional Park facilities.

The idea for a regional park system, a chain of recreational facilities linking East Bay communities, was born some 70 years

(Continued on page 2)

A later addition to the Regional Park system is Pinole Regional Park — 1,000 acres stretching 3½ miles along the shoreline of San Pablo Bay.

PARKS: YESTERYEAR AND TOMORROW

(Continued from page 1)

ahead of the official founding of the East Bay Regional Park District in 1935. It was the idea of Frederick Law Omstead, Sr., former New York park official and Civil War civilian-hero, who helped design the University of California campus at Berkeley and who landscaped the Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland.

Olmstead suggested that the East Bay hilltops be given over to parksites. His idea might have died if it were not for Charles Mulford Robinson, a consultant to Oakland city planners. He proposed an extensive park system, including the hilltops, but, unfortunately, the 1906 earthquake hit before his plan was circulated. Reconstruction efforts placed his park prospectus in limbo.

A group called the Contra Costa Hills Club took up the idea a decade or so later, and while it persistently pushed the parks plan, it wasn't until the bottom of the Great Depression that the East Bay Regional Parks District was brought to a vote, and carried by a convincing margin of three to one. The balloting was held in Alameda County communities only, between San Leandro and Berkeley.

The first land for parks was bought in 1936 from the East Bay Municipal Utility District, and the first Regional Park established was at Lake Temescal.

Contra Costa County voted annexation to the Regional Park system in June of 1964. Society members will hear about the development of present parks in Contra Costa and future plans from Mr. Nelson.

GUEST SPEAKER

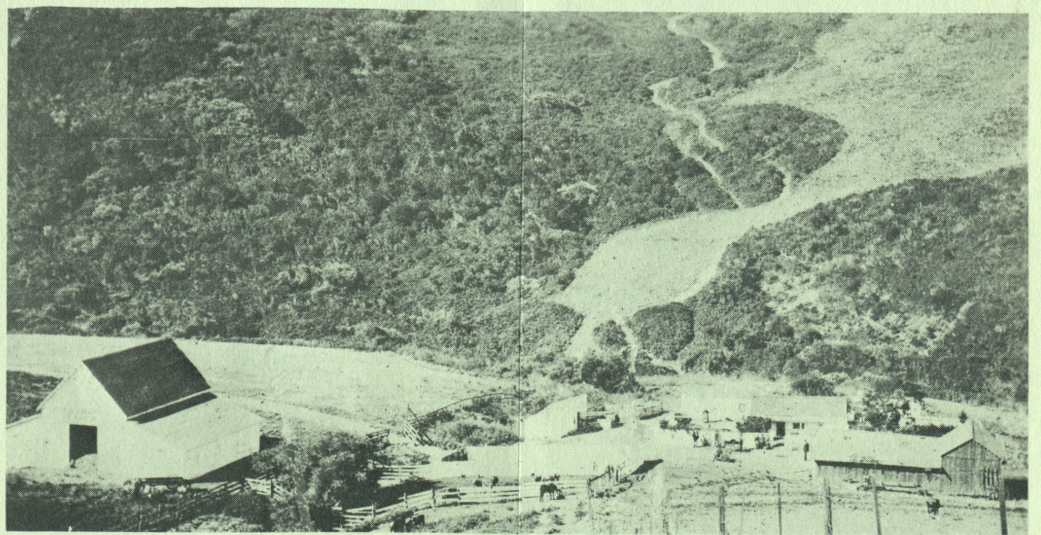
Christian Nelson has been involved in parks, recreation and environmental concerns since the mid-1950s at Oregon State University, where he took a Master of Science Degree and later became an assistant in the zoology department.

He is now the Chief of the Interpretive Department, East Bay Regional Park District.

Among the many honors that have come his way is this year's Fellow Award by the Association of Interpretive Naturalists. The National Science for Youth Foundation presented him with the Naumberg National Award in 1961, and the California Conservation Council gave him its Merit Award in 1960.

Mr. Nelson is a member of numerous professional groups, including the National Wildlife Federation, Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education and the American Nature Study Society.

His topic for the evening will be: "The History and Future Prospects of Regional Parks in Contra Costa County."



Just north of present-day Jewel Lake in Tilden Park was the site of the Sullivan Ranch around the turn of the century.

Site of a new park? Many Contra Costans hope that the 1856 John Marsh home near Brentwood will be turned into a recreational and cultural center. Still standing but in disrepair, the historic old home is to be refurbished when funds are available. Photo shows house in 1947.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Officers

President ..... Justice A. F. Bray
First Vice President ..... Louis L. Stein
Second Vice President ..... Roy S. Bloss
Secretary ..... James B. Jory
Treasurer ..... George Harlow

Directors

Rev. William N. Abeloe ..... Lafayette
Scott R. Akers ..... Walnut Creek
Roy S. Bloss ..... Alamo
Justice A. F. Bray ..... Martinez
Grant Burton ..... Pleasant Hill
Fern Davis ..... Walnut Creek
Robert R. Dougherty ..... Clayton
Ruth Galindo ..... Concord
George Harlow ..... Richmond
Bertha D. Hellum ..... Pleasant Hill
James B. Jory ..... Martinez
Dr. George A. Pettitt ..... Berkeley
Carol Leland ..... Orinda
Louis L. Stein ..... Berkeley
William Tornheim ..... Antioch

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

DINNER & PROGRAM

Speaker: Christian Nelson, Chief Interpretive Department East Bay Regional Parks District

Date: November 15, 1973

Place: Concord Sheraton Inn
45 John Glenn Drive
(off Concord Avenue)

Time: 7:00 p.m., no-host cocktails
7:30 p.m., dinner, $6 25

Reservations: To J. B. Jory, Sect'y
P.O. Box 190
Martinez, CA 94554

COME ONE! COME ALL!